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Grays Harbor County Canvassing Board
% Vern Spatz, Auditor
100 West Broadway
Montesano, WA 98563

Dear Canvassing Board Members:

In accordance with RCW 29A.04.570, the State Election Certification and Training Program conducted a comprehensive review of election procedures in Grays Harbor County during the 2006 General Election.

The RCW requires a follow-up visit prior to the next Primary or General Election to verify the County has taken the steps necessary to address the changes recommended in the review report.

The following recommendations were discussed during the follow-up visit:

Precinct Boundaries

Montesano Precinct #601 must be made compact and contiguous. The next time the elections department makes changes to Grays Harbor County voting precincts; boundary lines should be defined using visible physical features rather than section, township, and range lines.

Follow Up: The recommended changes will be incorporated when precinct lines are redrawn.

Questionnaires to Cities, Towns, and Districts

The County Auditor must mail questionnaires to the districts each year. The format of the 2005 questionnaire is sufficient for this purpose.

Follow Up: Two questionnaires were mailed to every district in 2007 requesting confirmation of information regarding elected officials serving in the district.

Verification and Confirmation Notices

Verification and confirmation notices must be sent with return postage pre-paid. Upon learning of this requirement, the Grays Harbor County Auditor provided return postage on the confirmation and verification notices.

The elections department should send confirmation notices to all known addresses where the voter might reasonably be expected to receive mail. The confirmation form must inform the recipient that if, after being placed on inactive status, he or she does not respond or vote in one of the next two federal elections, the registration will be canceled.

Follow Up: All verification and confirmation notices now provide return postage pre-paid to the voter. Confirmation notices have been expanded to inform the voter of the circumstances that might cancel a registration and cards are now sent to every address of record for which a voter might receive mail.

Verification of Voter's Signature

Voters with unverifiable signatures on the ballot affidavit must be informed of all types of acceptable identification and all methods for correcting the problem preventing the ballot from being counted. The letter must state that identification must contain the voter's current signature and be received by the day prior to the certification of the election. The Auditor might consider including a voter registration form with the letter to assist with updating the signature for future elections.

Follow Up: A list of all forms of acceptable identification and all required information will be added to the letter notifying voters of unverifiable signatures no later than January of 2008.

Placement of Measures and Races on Ballot

The Grays Harbor Elections Department should follow its written procedures when determining the placement of issues and offices on ballots and notices.

Follow Up: The election staff is updating county procedures to reflect current practices.

Notification to Nonpartisan Candidates

Nonpartisan candidates must be notified after the last day for withdrawals if no primary will be held for the position for which they have filed. This notification may be by mail, phone or electronically, but must be done as soon as possible.

Follow Up: Notices are now sent to nonpartisan candidates not appearing on the primary ballot following the closing of candidate filing.

Notice of Closing of Registration

Notices of Closing of Registration must state the correct date for closing of registration and define who is qualified to register to vote in the late registration period. The last day

to register should be listed, not the last day that the Auditor's Office is open. Even if the Auditor's Office will not be open on that day, voters may mail in a registration form and it will be accepted if it contains a valid postmark prior to the date of closing.

Follow Up: The notice of closing for the 2007 General Election correctly stated the final date for making transfers and submitting mail in registrations. The notice also included information on who may register in person during the late registration period.

Notice of Assistance

Public notice of the availability of registration and voting assistance to elderly and disabled persons must be made no later than 30 days prior to a primary or election. It is acceptable to include such information with the publication of the notice of closing of voter registration.

Follow Up: Information on assistance to the elderly and disabled has been added to the Notice of Closing of Registration.

Notice of Election

The legal Notice of Election must include the addresses of all candidates to be voted upon at that election.

A notice of vote by mail election must state that no neighborhood polls are open, and the County Auditor's Office will be open for replacement ballots, provisional ballots, and disability access voting. The amount of postage required on the return envelope and the schedules for access to disability assistance units must also be part of the notice.

Follow Up: Addresses of all candidates were included in the 2007 notices of elections published for the Primary and the General Election. The information specific to conducting a vote by mail election will be added to the notice before the first election in 2008.

Ballot Drop Sites Open on Election Day

Office procedures should include the task of ascertaining that the front door of the Grays Harbor County Courthouse is open by 7:00 a.m. on Election Day.

Follow Up: Procedures are being followed to verify voter access to the courthouse by 7:00 a.m. on Election Day.

Ballot Request Forms

The Auditor's Office must have application forms for hospital absentee ballots and special absentee ballots available.

The County Auditor should develop detailed procedures for issuing special absentee ballots and procedures for processing these ballots.

Follow Up: The Auditor's Office now has hospital absentee ballot request forms. Special absentee ballot request forms and procedures will be available early in 2008.

Oath of Election Staff

An oath must be signed by the ballot drop site workers.

Follow Up: An oath attesting to performance of duties is now required for all ballot drop site workers.

Auditor's Office as a Poll Site

The Auditor's Office must display HAVA posters in a highly visible manner in any location serving as a polling place, including the Auditor's Office.

Disability access voting must begin 20 days prior to the election. In spite of limited office space, the disability access unit must be relocated to ensure that the unit is accessible and still allows a voter to vote in secrecy.

Follow Up: All required information is displayed and the disability access unit is now located to ensure accessibility and secrecy.

Provisional Ballots

A free access system not only provides information on the final disposition of a voter's provisional ballot, but supplies written instructions to a voter explaining how to learn if the provisional ballot was or was not counted. A complete informational system must be developed and implemented.

The Elections Department must issue a regular ballot to voters who are currently on "inactive" status and seek to vote, not a provisional ballot.

Follow Up: Voters of provisional ballots will be provided information on how to find out the resolution of the ballot by 2008. Grays Harbor elections staff now issues regular ballots to voters in inactive status.

Delegation of Authority

The Grays Harbor County Canvassing Board must delegate tasks to the County Auditor and the Auditor's staff in order for the staff to perform election tasks on the Board's behalf. Delegation must be made in writing before duties are performed. Delegation by the Canvassing Board may be adopted for a single election, or for all elections, but must be retained on file by the County Auditor.

Follow Up: The written delegation of Canvassing Board duties to the County Auditor is currently on file.

Canvassing Board Manual

The Grays Harbor County Canvassing Board Manual needs to be updated. Although the County Auditor conducts the election in compliance with current statute, some of the rules in the County Canvassing Board Manual are out of date, especially those pertaining to challenges of voter registration and recounting election results. Once updated, the Canvassing Board must adopt the rules at a public meeting. The date of adoption should be included in the manual.

Follow Up: The Grays Harbor County Canvassing Board Manual was updated, reviewed and adopted during a public meeting in June 2007.

The Honorable Vern Spatz and his staff should be commended for their obvious dedication and desire to improve in all matters regarding elections.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at (360) 725.5770 or email at lnieland@secstate.wa.gov.

Sincerely,



Libby Nieland
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Election Certification and Training